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# THE WISCONSIN ARCHITECT



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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
THE STATE ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN ARCHITECTS  
WISCONSIN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
OF ARCHITECTS  
BUILDING CONGRESS OF WISCONSIN

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*Short Course in Architectural Concrete*





*Architectural Concrete!*

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## Architractors and Contratechts

By ROGER ALLEN, A. I. A.

"A new name might do a great deal to dramatize the present day position of the contractor and builder in the residential field," says a recent editorial in a magazine circulating chiefly among builders. "'Architractor' captures the imagination. It suggests the complete home building service needed today. . . . It has professional dignity and suggests a centralized service that is highly important."

The editor was right about one thing—"architractor" certainly captures the imagination. As soon as I read that curious and sinister combination of syllables I realized that for some days about all I would get to do would be to repeat "architractors" frequently, followed by "tsk, tsk." And how right I was! For a week I was able to say little else, and my nearest and dearest were on the point of calling in a psychiatrist (they would have, too, only none of them could spell it) when my condition began to improve slowly.

"Architractor," you will observe, is made up of the first syllable of the word "architect" coupled to the last syllable of the word "contractor." Judging from the relative placing of the syllables, an "architractor" is a man who is more of an architect than a contractor. Conversely, I suppose, a man who was more of a contractor than an architect can expect to be saluted as a "contratecht."

There is no reason to stop here. Using the same reasoning, a bricklayer who plays the saxophone of nights could be known either as a brickophonist or a saxolayer, depending upon which art was dearest to him. A druggist who passed part of his time putting up prescriptions for cheese sandwiches—and don't they all?—could sign himself, proudly or otherwise, as an apothochef.

The whole subject has a horrid fascination.

As an architect, I am bound to believe that the coiner of the word "architractor" is laboring under a common delusion. He feels and with some show of reason that since an architect designs a house and a contractor builds it, much could be saved by combining the two functions.

Pursuing the same kind of logic, the druggist who puts up a prescription is in just as good a position to write the prescription itself as the physician who actually does so. And yet we all feel, somehow, that he isn't.

There was a time when all the surgeons were barbers. Nowadays, however, you seldom see a man hanging around a barber shop waiting to have his appendix out. Why not? Because as time progressed, the need for specialization became apparent. Being a good barber is a full time job, and so is being a good surgeon.

In the case of the druggist, his prescriptions (if he were not, as is now the case in most states, prohibited by law from prescribing except for minor ailments) would be greeted with some skepticism, for the reason that he has something to sell besides advice. That is, he gets his profit from the sale of the remedy, not for the advice.

This is true also of the contractor. He is in the position of selling the owner a certain combination of concrete, stone, wood, glass and so on, for profit. His

profit will be greater if this combination is one that is easily assembled, and of materials not too costly. Human nature being what it is, his advice will be colored by this knowledge.

An architect, like a physician, sells you professional services. His advice is based on what you can afford to pay for, and his aim is to combine the elements that enter into a building into a harmonious and livable whole.

The prime function of any building is to keep out the elements. A two by four framework covered with tar paper will do this. So will a cave. But few of us, from choice at least, live in tar paper shacks, and fewer still haunt the realtor's office demanding plaintively that he find us a commodious cave with hot and cold running lizards. Why not?

Because the human soul has a craving for beauty. Beauty of form in a building is as important to some of us as protection from the elements. Where some of us, including the inventor of the word "architractors," make a mistake is when we believe that this beauty can only be obtained at extra cost.

The architect's job is to produce buildings that offer something besides protection from rain and snow and sleet, or from the heat of summer. His buildings, if he is any good at all, will be superior in appearance, in livableness and in trouble-free life, from buildings erected without his services. And should the architect, in an ill-advised moment, try to combine the functions of the architect with the duties of the contractor, one phase of the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde combination is likely to suffer.

Today more than ever the practice of the profession of architecture demands a great deal from its practitioner. New materials, new methods, new requirements must be studied. No one can "learn" the profession so that it will stay learned, in the sense that men used to "learn" a trade. The process of learning is a continuous one.

There are some architects ideally fitted by temperament and experience to build the buildings they design. There are a few contractors equally fitted to design the buildings they build. Most of us, however, are jacks of one trade. The man or woman with a building to build will do well to entrust the designing to an architect and the building to a contractor, rather than to thumb through the telephone directory in a futile (I hope) search for either an architractor or a contratecht.

## Mr. Ickes' Bathroom

Last week Secretary of the Interior Ickes moved into his new \$13,000,000 Department of the Interior Building, the first major Government edifice planned and built in Washington by the New Deal. Justly proud of his massive limestone masterpiece, which sprawls over two blocks and has twelve wings to insure outside light to every office, he invited Washington news hawks in to view its wonders as soon as he got himself seated in his oak-paneled office. To his chagrin the news hawks decided that the wonder of wonders was his private bathroom with giddy blue tile walls, a tub which they described as "not quite big enough for a swim," a bath mat embroidered with a brown donkey and the confident inscription: "We are here to stay."—*Time*.



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## Minutes of the April Meeting of the State Executive Board

The regular monthly meeting of the State Association of Wisconsin Architects was held on Friday, April 16, 1937, at the City Club, Milwaukee.

The President, First and Second Vice Presidents being absent, the Secretary was appointed to preside at the meeting which came to order at 1 P. M.

Present were Messrs. Stubenrauch, Mickelsen, Brust, Hunt, Brielmaier, Stepnoski, and Seidenschwartz.

Represented by proxy were Messrs. Berners, Potter and Tullgren.

Absent were Messrs. Auler, Buemming, Kirchhoff, Eschweiler, Herbst and Scott.

### Report of the Publicity:

Leigh Hunt, Chairman of the Publicity Committee, reported that nothing would be done on the advertising campaign in the Milwaukee Journal (as for starting the running of the ads) until the money to pay for these ads was subscribed for and forthcoming to the extent of at least 100 subscriptions.

Under this order of business Edgar Stubenrauch of Sheboygan submitted a proof from the local Sheboygan newspaper, showing the setup of an advertising campaign being sponsored for all crafts in the building industry including the Architects. Mr. Stubenrauch stated that he and the several Architects of Sheboygan were approached to help support the campaign and subscribe thereto. Some of the Architects stated that they would take part in the campaign if the Association would sanction it. After considerable discussion a motion was offered by Peter Brust and seconded by Wm. Mickelsen that the Association does not approve of this type of advertising jointly with Contractors and material men but that we advertise separately as a professional group. Motion was adopted.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, same was adjourned at 2:20 P. M.

ARTHUR L. SEIDENSCHWARTZ, *Secretary.*

## An Architect Views Contractors

Carlton W. Adams, president of the West Texas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, addressed the Building Division of the Associated General Contractors at its meeting held at the annual convention in San Antonio. Mr. Adams' frank analysis of the mutual problems of contractors and architects, and his plea for closer cooperation were enthusiastically received by the building contractors who heard his talk.

These words "contractor" and "architect," which are used to designate us, just what do they mean? Comparatively few know just what they mean; and so our first "mutual objective" is to tell the public what these words mean; tell the people who we are and what we do, and to what we dedicate ourselves. Most of the public don't even know how to pronounce the words "architect" and "contractor."

I am not surprised that the little school girl was confused and got the word "architect" confused with "artichoke," and when the teacher asked her: What is an architect? she said she wasn't sure, but thought an architect was some kind of cabbage, all green on the



outside and nothing on the inside; and then added, "Mother likes them better than Father."

Now, of course, I tell that on the architects, by way of license to say something about the contractors also.

I think that when they decided to call contractors "contractors," it was for the purpose of contrast, and on the same theory that they call a two-hundred-and-forty-pound tenor "Pee-wee," and a black Negro porter "Snowball." Contractors are men that don't know the meaning of the word "contraction." They are always extending, reaching out and out, and building up and up. They are men who must expand or bust; and they sometimes do expand and bust, but they never by any chance contract.

Contractors' special words are "extension," "expansion," and best of all, your very, very special word is "extra." If you were called "extractors," it would be more appropriate.

Then some people call you contractors, with accent on the "con." Perhaps they figure you are the original "con" men.

I was interested that this afternoon's horse races at Alamo Downs were announced a few minutes ago. I assume you know that the Texas Legislature, now in session, is on the point of outlawing horse racing because of the gambling. A legislator asked me a few days ago if I wasn't horrified at the existing conditions, and against horse racing and legalized gambling. I told him that the practice of architecture had hardened me to gambling, and that I had so long associated with contractors that gambling on mere horses seemed trivial. If the Texas Legislature knew what gamblers you fellows are, they would have an investigating committee at this convention. You lay your all on your guesses, and your hunches. You gamble on the weather, strikes, panics, floods, wrecks, material prices, taxes, banks, subs, politicians, owners, PWA inspectors, and last but not least, architects.

Yes sir, it is a hard life; and it looks like the cards are stacked against you, until the contract is signed; and then you generally prove to be the better men; and then you do a little stacking yourselves. Sometimes, your ace in the hole, is called "extras." If the cards are right for you, you rake in a neat pot or profit. If not, it is said you beat down the subs; and (I do not know this from personal experience, but from hearsay) I am advised you sometimes deliver second-class work.

Seriously, I say all of this good naturedly by way of bringing out the fact that contractors and architects should know one another and understand one another. Our mutual objectives can best be accomplished through a better understanding and closer cooperation.

In reference to the subject of our mutual objectives and how to obtain them, let me first accent the fact that most of our objectives are mutual.

Our final objective is a successful building operation. The three principals in the transaction are the owner, the architect and the contractor. For a consideration the two latter serve the former, as stated, and the mutual objective is a satisfactory building operation.

This can be accomplished only through good performance on the part of both the architect and the contractor.—*The Constructor.*

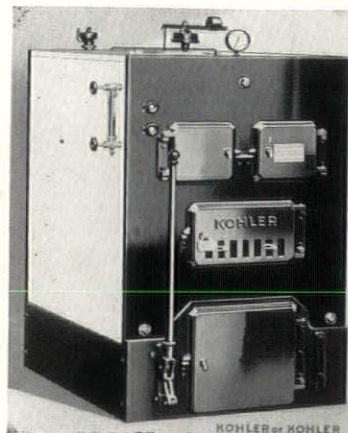
(To be continued in June issue)

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## Short Course in Architectural Concrete

F. A. Kartak, Dean of Engineering, Marquette University, announces a short course in Architectural Concrete to be sponsored jointly by the University and the Portland Cement Association.

Modern methods of producing inspiring and beautiful design effects in architectural concrete which have proven so popular on the Pacific coast, are to be explained and described in detail, according to Dean Kartak.

Results of years of research and study of architectural concrete by concrete experts are to be made available to those interested in building, enabling them to become familiar with the uses of architectural concrete in building construction.

The course will cover the proper selection of aggregates, design and control of concrete mixtures, reinforcements, economies in form construction, the placing of concrete by vibration, with particular emphasis on the use of ornamental moulds, architectural treatment, and many other phases of architectural concrete in building construction.

R. S. Phillips, field representative of the Structural and Technical Bureau of the Portland Cement Association, Chicago, will conduct the sessions on concrete. W. L. Davis, also of Chicago, and formerly a construction superintendent in California, will discuss form erection and construction methods.

The sessions will be held in Room 100-S, Science Hall, Marquette University, 1217 West Wisconsin Avenue, on June 9, 10 and 11 at 8:00 P. M. There will be no charge.

## Futures

In this period of rapid change in the social, economic and political structure, groups engaged in particular work must readjust their thinking and activities to meet these changes. Merely hoping that the status quo may be maintained is futile. The profession of architecture has gained enviable recognition in the past fifty years. However, during the last few years the problem of survival in the private practice of architecture has become increasingly acute as competition in the field of building design has sprung up from all sides. How to meet this competition should occupy much of the time of the architects assembled at the A. I. A. convention.

The depression has made it necessary for many

younger men to devote their services to building design organizations outside of the so-called "profession." Engineers and builders, industrial designers, real estate developers and manufacturers have absorbed men who might be practicing as professional architects, in their own names. Governmental departments—national, state and local—have also absorbed these anonymous architects. Well-trained and able designers are thus adding to the prestige of groups other than the "professional architect," and this necessarily to the detriment of the profession. This process may continue if the public feels that these other organizations are more competently organized to fill its demands. We believe that the only advantage these organizations have is that of better merchandising, better advertising and better publicity methods. Professional ethical standards have frowned upon the commercial aspects of architecture, and have thus paved the way for others to take the play away from the profession in the public mind.

The problem is not alone one of merchandising and publicity: it is a problem of orienting the profession, of more accurately defining its functions, of unifying its efforts and, above all, of increasing its competence in the fulfillment of those functions to which it addresses itself.

The profession cannot accuse others of usurping their prerogatives, if it does not define them, is not organized to defend them, or is not competent to exercise them.

It is thus a three-part problem of direction, organization and education.

## Who Designs Houses?

The architects of America design probably 90% of the houses in America, statistics of contracts to the contrary notwithstanding. But the architects do not design these houses individually; they design them unwillingly through unauthorized agencies. These self-appointed proxies are contractors, carpenters, speculative builders, young draftsmen, plan publishers—in fact, anyone with a camera and a more or less facile pencil. These copyists sometimes have a surprising lack of taste, sense of proportion or appreciation of either function or beauty. However, the architects themselves do set the pace—the others copy. Plan book publishers have been known to photograph existing buildings designed by architects, and to devise a plan which might fit, to put in their catalogs from which to sell plans. Architects' designs appear in innumerable magazines and are available to anyone who can use them, either intelligently or unintelligently. While it is unfortunate that this publicity given to architectural work has meant that many have profited other than the creators, the effect, on the whole, has been to raise the standards of design of small houses in this country. In view of these realities, the only solution to the small house architects' problem seems to be that of proving to the public that the architect can design a house which will cost no more, but which will perform its functions better, give more lasting satisfaction to the owner than the imitative, jerry-built house. The architect might be able to do this by more closely integrating his work with the actual construction by letting the subcontracts himself and giving real supervision.

KENNETH K. STOWELL, *Editor*  
*American Architect and Architecture*, May, 1937

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## Seventh District Committees

The following names constitute the various committees which were appointed at the Seventh District Executive Board Meeting which took place on April 2.

### Legislative Committee.

Walter G. Memmler, Chairman,  
Herman W. Buemling,  
Frank F. Drolshagen,  
Mark F. Pfaller.

### Practice Committee.

Arthur L. Seidenschwartz, Chrmn.,  
Milton C. Hermann,  
Greg. G. Lefebvre.

### Publicity Committee.

Peter Brust, Chairman,  
Wesley L. Hess,

### George G. Schneider.

### Public Works Committee.

Fred Wegner, Chairman,  
Erich P. Grzbowski,  
Fred A. Luber.

### Entertainment Committee.

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Alvin E. Grellinger,  
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Allan E. Kiely,  
Henry Slaby.

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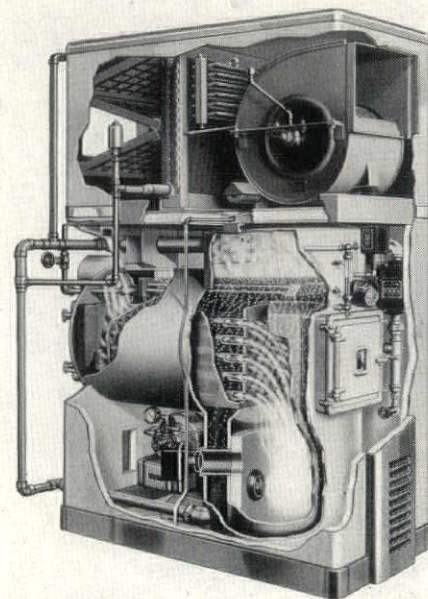
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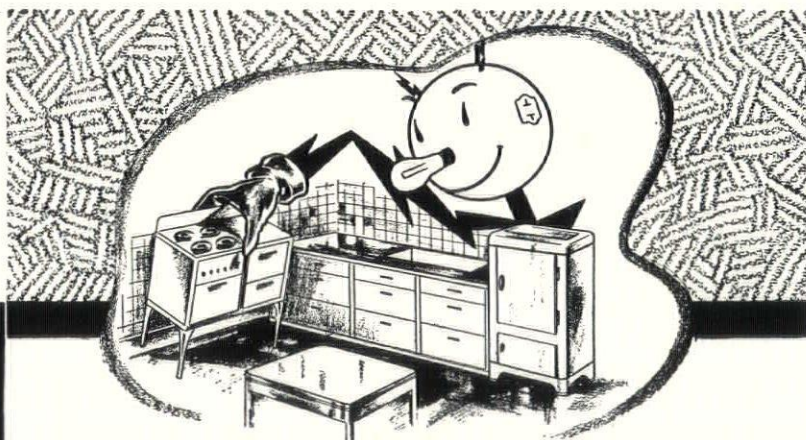
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Refrigerators ..... 10,250  
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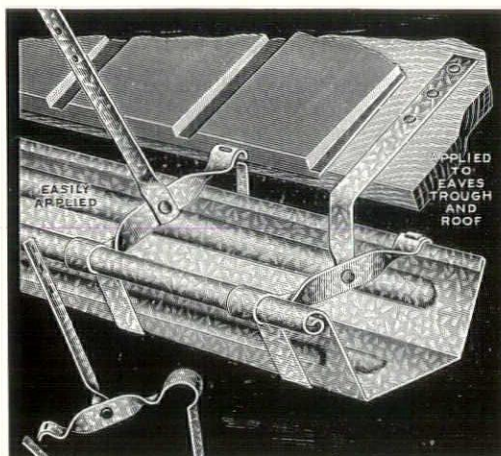
1937 Estimated Sales  
ELECTRIC  
Ranges ..... 3,000  
Refrigerators ..... 15,000  
Water Heaters ..... 1,200

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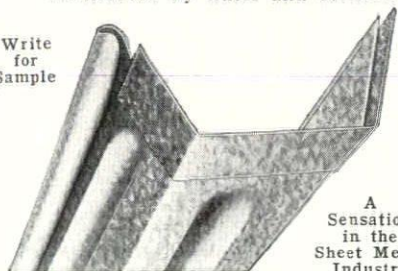




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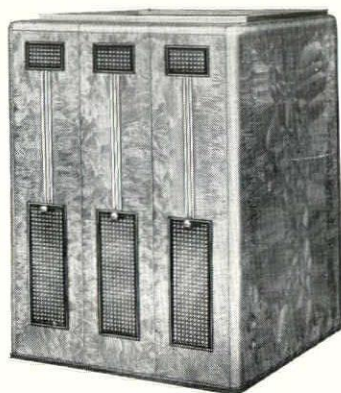
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